

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB STRESS
AND JOB-RELATED FACTORS
AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS**

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This study examines the relationship between job stress and job-related factors among primary school teachers in Seremban , Negeri Sembilan. The main purpose of this study is to determine the level of job stress among teachers in Seremban. This study specially identifies the relationship between job stress and working condition, workload, career progress, working relationships and student behavior.

This study was conducted in selected 16 primary schools in Seremban. A total of 150 teachers were selected by using a random sampling procedure. The pilot study was piloted in two selected schools in Seremban. The pilot study was piloted towards 20 teachers in two selected schools in the district mentioned in order to test the reliability and validity of the instrument. The actual research was distributed to all the sixteen

primary schools. There were 150 respondents who completely responded the instrument and the return rate was 93.75% of 160 questionnaires.

A descriptive type of questionnaire was applied in the instrument of the study. Data gathered and collected was analyzed using the SPSS. The statistical analysis of descriptive frequency and percentage were carried out to determine respondents' background, workload condition, and the level of job stress. Correlation analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between job stress and job-related factors. The analysis of mean score and standard deviation were carried out to explain the statements of items for each factor related to stress among teachers.

This study findings reveals that most of the teachers in urban area work in level of moderate stress, much stress and extreme stress with the evidence of 81.5% teachers in this study. There is a significant relationship between job stress and job-related factors. There are moderate correlation and substantial relationship between job stress among teachers and the factors of career progress, working condition and student behavior with the correlation coefficient of 0.328, 0.388 and 0.314 each. The relationship between working condition is significant with the correlation of 0.266 and workload at 0.293 each.

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations are forwarded.

Firstly, positive feedback should be obtained after the observation from the education officers when visiting schools. Secondly, the government should revise and plan a more attractive promotion package and salary scheme. Thirdly, the administration should take stern action against students with disciplinary problems in order to make teaching and learning process more effective to produce excellent students. Fourthly, the ministry should look into the workload and the stress teachers faced in education students. Finally, the ministry has to carry out a program to overcome job stress among teachers and try to revise the workload that they are now facing.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

This chapter consists of five subsections. The first section will overview the job stress among teachers in Malaysia, followed by the statement of the problem. Subsection three and four will present the objective of the study and the significant of the study respectively. Subsection five will highlight the limitation of the study followed by the definition of terms used in the study.

1.1. Job Stress among Teachers

Teaching was known as a noble profession before 1970's that seldom is stressful. However, of late teaching has been listed as one of the stressful career by researchers (Ness, 2001). Investigation on job stress among educators has been investigated too by researchers in the United State, United Kingdom (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1979; Kyriacou, 1987; Pont & Reid, 1985), England (Gold, 1993), Singapore (Lim-Ng Ai Tee, 1990) and Malaysia (Abd Malek, 2000; Lee Siok Yen, 1992; Zubaidah, 1999; Soo Yu Min, 1996; Suseela, 1994; Noor Azzuddin, 1990; Nagayanya Muniah, 1998).

Teachers nowadays have to deal with so many different demands and pressures, emotional, physical, and administrative and management duties but also to some inconsiderate parents' demands and wants. Besides that, the large number of students in a classroom, packed timetable, uneven duties, uncomfortable working conditions, co-curriculum activities, meetings, in-house trainings, courses to attend extra classes and the unnecessary amount of

paperwork are some of the main contributions to the increased causes of stress among teachers. The Teacher Association of Malaysia has commented on the changes in today's education. This change may create an inconvenience workplace, whereby the number of students in a classroom is too large, and teacher's packed timetable between 28 to 30 periods a week, the unnecessary paperwork and the bad students' behavior (New Straits Times, 29th March 1996, in Suseela, 1994).

Job stress among teachers is a serious problem that can affect the teachers' mentally and physically. Teachers are also blamed for not being able to educate students' to be more responsible citizens. As a result, they are less motivated; burn out, dissatisfied and low in performance. Things could be worst, if they intent to leave after burnout. Holding on to the profession would cause them to be less motivated and their teaching would be ineffective. This would then definitely affect the society improvement because students are main leaders of the next generation (Farber, 1998).

Teachers have always been required to deal with the various forms of students' discipline problems that are also related to the students' development. Discipline problems too are on the rise and teachers face discipline difficulties dealing with a large number of students with different needs and interests. However, the challenge arising from the situation in which teachers are being asked to prepare students for a society characterized by rapid technological change whilst. Teachers are not only burdened with the existing curriculum relevance, assessment criteria and educational objectives

but taken on a new seriousness. The whole network of contradictions in which teachers operate that are related to the difficulties of reconciling the needs of individuals with the interest of society have been exposed in a most painful manner (Barton & Walker, 1994).

Being the only source of manpower in the education field to produce quality education, there is an urgent need for investigation to counteract the negative consequences of work-related stress on teachers. It will also be a guideline for the top management to be more sensitive to the stress and the amount of stress experienced by teachers to provide stress management programs to help teachers cope with stress. If the negative consequences of stress are left unheeded they will definitely have an adverse effect on the teacher's job performance and their health. As a result, the administration will have to face frequent absenteeism, teachers leaving their jobs, even early optional retirement, lack of commitment to the job while they explore their other possible career alternatives and teachers losing interest. Job stress decreases the intention and motivation of teachers in teaching the young children (Brimm, 1993) Therefore, the matter must be looked into to provide healthy and effective organization to work in.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Job stress among teachers has become a cause of concern for teachers, administration and colleges of educationists. Teachers are stressful in teaching and handling discipline problems among students, which have created a lot of social problem and ferocity in today's society. Teachers in schools are said to be responsible. Nowadays, lack of teachers in schools and also the

advancement of modern teaching methods increase workload and pressures among teachers (Hargreaves, 1995).

Thus, teachers are advised to further improve themselves in terms of creativity, innovations and critical thinking to cope with the advancement of science and technology in the educational field. In the last eighteen years, the system of education in Malaysia has undergone considerable changes whereby teachers are now facing students with a wide range of abilities in the 21st century. Teaching task becomes more difficult as teachers have to face the increasing behavioral problems and dissatisfaction among students (Utusan Melayu, 15th August 2003).

What has caused teaching to be so unattractive and stressful? Researchers have constantly found that stress is indeed a vast problem among teachers. There are many factors that influence stress among teachers that seemed to be beyond their control. Stress among teacher can be minimized if the administrative take appropriate measures. If not, it will have an impact in teacher's emotional, mental and physical health such hypertension and the safety of teachers against classroom violence, increased financial cost to the school system in treating stress-related illnesses of teachers and replacing teachers (Harris, 1999).

In Malaysia and other countries job stress among teachers is the main problem. In Malaysia itself, teachers were the main target of criticism due to their inability to provide knowledge and services to society; and a few cases were also reported about their abnormalities or mental problems (New Straits

Times, 30th June 1992 in Suseela, 1994). It is mentioned that there are 3,000 teachers both in primary and secondary schools have opted for early retirement and worked in private sector in 1982 until 1985 (Berita Harian, 30th March 1985, in Siti Rohani, 1991).

The decline in the quality of teachers and the increasing number of optional retirement among teachers could be the result of occupational stress faced by them. Teachers add up the taskforce and human resource that play a vital role of the success of implementation of any educational programmes. Thus, researchers believed that it is imperative to have a deep and better understanding on teachers' well being especially the stress faced by them if Malaysia decides to have a pool of world- class educators. The need becomes crucial with the any changes in the field of education loaded with never ending students' behavior, workload, performance appraisal and changes in education policy. The changes and demands affect stress among teachers (Yong, 1999).

1.3. Objective of the Study

This study seeks to investigate the relationship between job stress and the selected job-related factors. Job stress is evident in teacher's role, therefore, affecting their anxieties, organizational commitments and intentions to leave the teaching line namely school. More specifically, this study aims to:

- 1) determine the level of job stress among teachers in the primary schools in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan.

- 2) Examining the relationship between job stress and working conditions, workload, career progress, working relationships and students' behavior.

1.4. Significance of the Study

According to Cunningham (2000) it is vital that every employee examine their level of stress that he or she experiences and tries to solve it in order to reduce the impact to his or her work performances. Therefore, this study is significant in understanding the relationships between job stress and job-related factors among primary school teachers in today's teaching career due to the advancement and challenges in the science and technology era. Indeed, teachers are an important figure in molding, producing and leading students to be good productive young generation.

This study intends to promote a better theoretical understanding and recognition of the complexities associated with stress among teachers. Besides, it can contribute significantly towards future advancements in teacher's stress models that can also be a preliminary study on job stress among teachers. It can be a basis too for further studies on similar topics such as the coping strategies and stress for the same population or different population. The findings may also give other researchers a better understanding and awareness of the existence of stress among teachers. The information obtained from this study may help in educating a schoolteacher and designing programs for future teachers' training, and also in defining strategies in improving the education process in developing better future

generation among students. Nevertheless, the education ministry of Malaysia should take steps to minimize the stress level among teachers.

1.5. Operational Definition of Term

1.5.1. Stress

Stress refers to the physical, psychological and behavioral reactions experienced by individuals in situations where they feel that they are in danger or being overwhelmed or pushed beyond their abilities or limits (Cosgrave, 2001)

1.5.2. Stressor

Stressor is a stressful event or conditions that produces a psychological or physical reaction in the individual that is usually unpleasant and sometimes produce symptoms of emotional or physiological disabilities. In other words, the aspect of the work environment that can cause the individual strain and may lead to organizational consequences known as stressors (Beehr & Fenlason, 1990).

1.5.3. Burnout

Burnout refers to the physical, emotional and mental exhaustion as a result of prolonged intense emotional pressures exposure. It reflects an emotional reaction in people who often deal with human and work closely with them. People who experience burnout may develop cynical attitudes towards their jobs and also their clients and may feel emotional exhaustion,

depersonalization and a sense of low personal accomplishment or control. Burnout is inevitable in this job (Crosgrove, 2001)

1.5.4. Job-related factors

Job-related factors are all the factors related to the job or the working conditions of the employee in an organization. In this study, the criteria are working condition, workload, career progress, working relationship and students' behavior.

1.5.5. Job demand

The definition of job demand is psychological stressors such as working too hard or too fast, having too many responsibilities or having conflicting demands from several sources. Individuals may perceive role conflict when pressures from two or more sources are exerted such that complying with one source (Bernandin & Russell, 1998)

1.5.6. Workload

The quantity of work or the quality of the activity to be completed with mental requirements is the definition of workload. Overload can cause a person to work long hours to stay even and may result in fatigue and accidents (Ivancevich, 1995 & 1997). The most stressful aspects of work for teachers are workload and time pressures that are perceived by teachers.

1.5.7. Qualitative overload

Qualitative overload is the belief by an employee that he or she lacks the skills or abilities required performing a specific job (Baron, 1995)

1.5.8. Qualitative underload

Qualitative underload refers to the lack of mental stimulation that accompanies many routines, repetitious jobs (Baron, 1985).

1.5.9. Quantitative overload

Quantitative overload is a situation that an individual is confronted with more works than, can be completed in a given period of time (Baron, 1985).

1.5.10. Quantitative underload

Quantitative overload is boredom that results in employees that have so little to do and they find themselves sitting around most of the time (Baron, 1985).

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This study is descriptive in nature as it aims to give insights of the level of job stress among primary school teachers. Besides, the study also explores the relationship between job stress and job-related factors. A national survey is not possible to be conducted due to time constraints and the cost incurred.

In this study, the respondents are restricted to the area in Seremban. Therefore it cannot be generalized to all primary school teachers in the country.

Data collected for this study will be analyzed from the subjects in the questionnaire administered to the respondents. The respondents will be subjected to answer questions and express their views on job stress and job-

related factors, focusing on working conditions, workload, career progress, working relationship in school and students' behavior. Therefore the findings in this research cannot be generalized to the secondary school teachers or even other institution.

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